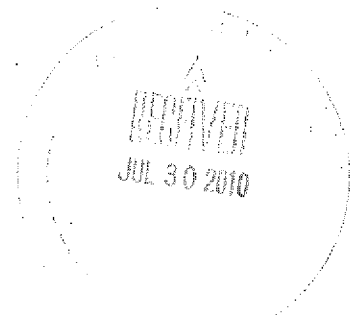


July 20, 2010

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Mr. Ted Matley  
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Reference: CITY OF HONOLULU'S HEAVY-ELEVATED-RAIL TRANSIT  
PROJECT: The 'Ewa Beach Community's Response To The Final  
Environment Impact Statement (EIS)

Aloha, Mr. Matley:

Let me thank you for the opportunity to present my opinions and comments on the proposed Honolulu heavy-elevated-rail transit project, perhaps the largest capital public works project the City and County of Honolulu will ever undertake at the expense of the taxpaying public, of which I strongly .... *oppose!*

I. INTRODUCTION

My name is Glenn Oamilda born and raised in Waipahu, O'ahu on the O'ahu sugar plantation, and presently reside in the nearby 'Ewa Beach community located on the leeward side on the island of O'ahu. For the last twenty-five (25) years, I had been involved in my community activities and organizations; and of today, as the population in the community and surrounding areas continue to expand and grow, I still remain active by providing a voice to the political, the social and cultural issues that directly impact the 'Ewa Beach community and the greater 'Ewa region.

II. O'AHU VOTERS APPROVE BALLOT REFERENDUM

Mr. Matley, the arguments and debates for and against rail transit has become very contentious, not only in my 'Ewa Beach community, the region but throughout the state as well. In the 2008 general election, the question of rail was placed on the ballot before the voting public. Although not by an over-whelming percentage, the voters still accepted the referendum on rail. However, as of today, and as the hours draw closer to the final decision as to whether the project, as proposed, will be accepted or rejected, tensions are at a snapping point between proponents and opponents over rail issues. Let me add that the same language used in the initial

conceptual rail proposal presented by Honolulu Mayor Mufi Hannemann to the general public in 2004, was on the ballot without significant changes.

III. MAYOR HENNEMANN PUSHES RAIL AGENDA

In retrospect, it became clearer to me and many taxpayers in my community and throughout the whole region, that the mayor from the onset of his election, had no intention of ever providing an *open, fair, transparent, up-front* and *equitable* public forum, nor a suitable, acceptable public process for *input, discourse, dialogue* and *discussion* on the project. Throughout the nearly six (6) years of selling this massive heavy-elevated-rail, the city and the area elected officials had never made a formal rail presentation to the 'Ewa Beach community, nor were the citizen taxpayers given the opportunity to openly discuss and dialogue: 1) the up-front estimated of a 6-billion-dollar price tag, and the after perpetual maintenance cost; 2) universal available technologies, i.e., meg lev, rubber-on-concrete, toll-ways, etc.; 3) the rail transit mode - elevated or surface; 4) the route alignment; and, 5) available local existing infrastructure(s) along the twenty-two-mile route. Even in recent years, the Hennemann administration made no gestures or made concerted efforts to reached to all the players in the region to come together in partnership and engage in the planning process with serious and continuous ongoing dialogues, discussions and discourses.

This passive inaction and insensitive display had only heightened and increased public tensions with deepening negative feelings. With on-going psychological pressures, financial and physical stresses, many living in the region had lost sight of that vision, and more so, could not continue to remain positive and hopeful that the initial planned goals of building a second city could ever come to fruition; while others, continue to speak out with confidence for more planning and remain hopeful the 'Ewa plains will sooner than later become the second city.

I recall very clearly in 2004 when Mayor Mufi Hannemann was first elected into office he presented to the public for the first time his conceptual layout of the mass transit project. Upon fielding questions from the audience, I asked the mayor a question of which I thought was very simple and very direct: Mr. mayor with the high cost of your proposed rail transit, couldn't the money be redirected and wisely spent in the 'Ewa region for the purposes of mitigating some of the impacts, like building new and repairing roads and parks, repairing and upgrading aging sewer plants and transmission lines throughout the entire island?

He retorted with sarcasm, saying, "Glenn, your thinking is in the minority!" He then quickly turned to all his department heads, city aides and workers who were standing in front of the glossy-colored layouts sitting on top about a dozen and

a half easels depicting the mass rail transit route alignment, and asked them: "Does anyone agree with Glenn?" He got an instant response. In unison, they all clapped and with a big roar said, "No!" At that point I knew that this transit project was a 'done deal,' leaving no doubt in my mind that this project was going to be his *baby* .... his *legacy*!

In reference to the question I asked the mayor about the funding choices between rail and the island's two sewage plants and the transmission lines, it seemed the repairs and upgrades were no big concerns for him. However, just recently, in June, 2010, the Hannemann administration, after spending over 10 million dollars of taxpayers money defying and evading the EPA over waivers and fighting legal battles, settled a contested law suit with federal government that will now cost the already burdened and strapped taxpayers and homeowners over 4 billion dollars. I truly believe that the mayor's financial priorities, were then and still are, simply skewed and misguided.

#### IV. 'EWA RESIDENTS QUESTION THE BENEFITS OF RAIL

For the most part, the residents in 'Ewa Beach and the 'Ewa region regard and believe this heavy-elevate rail transit is not and will not be the area's primary form of transportation, but clearly just another alternative mode of moving people around. In my opinion, rail will be just another choice, another alternative offered to the general public, and in all likelihood, people on this O'ahu island, will still choose the automobiles.

I cannot fully accept the Hannemann administration's decision, motive, nor feel comfortable and optimistic that rail is the answer; but this administration with a "lone ranger" attitude, has moved full speed ahead, hopeful and confident this proposed heavy-elevated-massive rail project will gain traction and literally get working people out of their automobile.

Mr. Matley, let me cite some examples. In the year 2000, the state with federal dollars initiated another ferry pilot project, the second one within five years, which nearly ran the same route as the first one along the coastline from 'Ewa Beach to Aloha Tower, downtown Honolulu. The state offered perks and freebees as inducements to get daily working commuting drivers from the west side out of their cars. However, after only a year of low public ridership, the ferry project went 'belly up.' It became clear and simple that drivers in Hawai'i are simply captivated by their big gas guzzling sedans and heavy SUV trucks. They really don't mind traveling far distances, and won't even blink an eye at the higher gas prices. Even attempts at car and bus pooling, stretching the freeways, rearranging workers schedules have not worked at all. The mayor should have learned from this picture.

There is no doubt in 2005, when the incoming mayor Hannemann made a serious pitch for mass transit, it became a top priority on his political agenda; and he aggressively challenged anyone who dare to oppose or even question his motive on how to solve the leeward traffic congestion problems. After his first term in office, the mayor, had shown no interest, gave no indication of redirecting, or further advancing the already approved 'Ewa Development Plan for the second city, The entire 'Ewa region.

V. STATE OF HAWAII DESIGNATES KAPOLEI SECOND CITY

Further, in the late '80s, when the State of Hawai'i designated Kapolei, on the 'Ewa plain as the Second City, it only meant that the downtown Honolulu business district, some miles away, and its surrounding populated areas were showing signs of bursting at the seams, of being overly crowded. City and county engineers and strategists, along with political and social planners, recommended workable guidelines that would relocate businesses from the downtown Honolulu area to the second city bringing their employees with them by offering tax incentives and tax credits; and at the same time, attracting housing developers who would design and build well-planned communities. Furthermore, these newly relocated workers would move in these planned communities, commuting workers would return to the region to work, and together they all would live, work and play in the area, thereby spending more time strengthening family relationships, community ties and enhancing the *life-style* values of Hawai'i's unique cultures and traditions.

VI. CITY & COUNTY OF HONOLULU FAILED TO PROVIDE LEADERSHIP AND OVERSIGHT

In the mid-to late '90s, housing developers and land speculators arrived in droves, they were truly noticeable by the staggering numbers of permit requests for land zoning, rezoning, waivers, amendments and agreements. Consequently, as a result the high numbers of permit approvals for housing developments easily out paced government's inability to provide guidance and leadership toward a *balanced* and *sustainable* growth. Problems, issues and impacts ballooned on the 'Ewa plains when both 'Ewa and Waipahu sugar plantations closed down. People watched and witnessed sugar lands being transformed and developed into presumably, the second city, but with no clear-cut conceptual objectives.

Mr. Matley, by the turn of the century, the city and county of Honolulu were totally overwhelmed by the rapid shift in the local population as well as an influx of newcomers, by inadequate infrastructure support to a growing region and by a rampant and uncontrolled housing boom. Over the past twenty-five plus years of following numerous developmental processes, it was not like all these mounting problematic impacts just popped up out of nowhere on the 'Ewa plains, government

planners will admit through available data that they were very predictable and solvable.

VII. 'EWA REGION OVERWHELMED WITH DEVELOPMENT IMPACTS, PROBLEM, ISSUES

So after years without government oversight e are at this point, the angry and frustrated growing working population, must now again, commute to downtown daily contending with the everyday hassles of meandering through the myriad of traffic and development problems, issues and impacts just to get to work and back. Many residents had grown increasingly leery, angry, apathetic with lost of trust and confidence in our government, elected politicians, and the city and county of Honolulu had yielded their inherent authorities and acceded their powers to the developers and powerful interest groups. What a very sad scenario.

In addition, the city's Department of Planning and Permitting (DPP) has projected that there will be about forty thousand (40,000) new homes built on the 'Ewa plains. This estimate does not include those houses already permit approved, shovel ready and on-going housing projects. This projected data points out that without proper and serious planning, one can only visualize that by the 2030 build-out the second city of Kapolei will look like a massive, sprawling bedroom metropolis.

Public dissent and dissatisfaction has manifested itself in other area of the island as well. Community leaders and residents living in the Central O'ahu area from Waipio Gentry, Mililani, Wahiawa, and others communities mauka or north, are skeptical that short term traffic solutions will be found. They have made it also clear at many community gatherings and meetings, that increased traffic congestion from the west side, will make it tougher for them to get to town every morning and back home every evening.

Like me, my family and others, who have lived on the 'Ewa plains for generations, felt that a comprehensive plan was needed with on-going and continuous public participation to insure a well maintained, *sustainable* and *balanced growth* throughout the region.

VIII. COMMUNITIES / GOVERNMENT BEGIN THE PLANNING PROCESS

Thus, through a *visioning team* consisting of community members and leaders from local boards, activities, organizations and in partnership with the city's planning department came together to address all future developments on the 'Ewa plains. After months and years of public discourses, dialogues and discussions, the team set in place a regional plan, a public/government document, consistent with a vision, concepts and policies, principles and goals with realistic guidelines for a

*balanced and sustainable growth.*

The Honolulu city council, in late 1997, adopted the 'Ewa Development Plan. the EDP was a the planning guide, a public/government document that offered as more realistic and pragmatic approach that addressed and dealt with all the present mounting impacts, as well as, future predictable issues and problems related to housing development and transportation. The EDP contained provisions that outlined the policies, the guidelines, the controls and enforcements while emphasizing strong quality government / public leadership and oversight. One of the more important provision agreed in the document was that EDP in its entirety shall be subject to public review every five years.

As a member of the original visioning team, the 'Ewa Development Plan was a two (2) tiered planning process. One was regional; and the other was community. On the regional level, communities on the 'Ewa plains would come together to participate in a review and reassessment process, discuss solutions to the present and future development issues, impacts and problems facing the region. On the other level, each community would come together to discuss local impacts, find solutions to present and future issues, problems and impacts, with the assurance and the understanding that each separate tiered planning processes don't conflict with each another.

Clearly, the EDP underscores two (2) important points: 1) In provision 5.1.2 that says .... "the city must take an active role in the planning and coordinating construction of needed infrastructure .... And the development of the regional transportation system ....," and, 2) In provision 2.2.10 .... "as a condition for zoning approval to insure that development does not outpace infrastructure development .... " The EDP specifically contains no language, no provision addressing or referring to the heavy-elevated-mass-rail, but only mention an intra-modal transportation system circulating within the second city.

#### IX. CITY DPP IGNORED 'EWA DEVELOPMENT PLAN FIRST REVIEW CYCLE

The 'Ewa Development Plan, however, is ten (10) years late and over due for public review. It missed the first and second five (5) year review cycles from being reviewed, reassessed and the necessary changes made to the EDP. Yea but, the questions I have lingering in my mind are: What will happen to all those construction projects from the last ten (10) years that have been included and approved by the Department of Planning and Permitting (DPP) that have already been built, in the paper mill or shovel ready? Furthermore, does the public get to decide what projects stay and what projects go?

**X. COMMUNITY MEMBERS MEET WITHOUT CITY OVER REGIONAL ISSUES, PROBLEMS**

In the fall of 2009, some 'Ewa Beach community members met with other leaders in the 'Ewa region despite the mayor's refusal to convene a forum. Using the same EDP as a guide, here, Mr. Matley, are some specific examples that were brought to light and put in the form of resolutions: 1) That the Urban Growth Boundary "be redrawn so as to place outside of the Urban Growth Boundary all of the land area intended for the Ho'opili project TMK (1) 9-1-17: 04, 59, and 72; TMK (1) 9-1-18: 01 and 04, with the exception of the land specifically designated by the University of Hawai'i, West O'ahu as both necessary for its mission and for purposes other than housing, and; 2) That all references to Ho'opili as a development be stricken from the 'Ewa Development Plan." In other words, the UGB which is presently makai or south of the H-1 freeway, move to the mauka or north of the H-1. The rationale is to keep the agricultural land in agriculture free of development.

Other resolutions adopted by this regional group were, a) "Under the General Policy, Transportation System Functions" found on page 4-12, paragraph 1, line 3: change "should" to "shall." (This section has three sub-headings. Connecting line 3 to the third sub-heading, the sentence will then read " .... its transportation system shall provide adequate capacity for major peak-hour commuting to work in the primary Urban Center." b) Under "Adequate Facilities Requirement" found on page 5-16: paragraph 1, line 4 strike "will be established during the Capital Improvement Program" and add "are established by this Plan as Level of Service B. This sentence will then read, "Level of Service Guidelines Adequate public facilities and infrastructure requirements are established by this Plan as Level of Service B," and; c) In paragraph two, strike "should" and replace it with "shall." The sentence will now read, " .... zoning and other development approvals for new

developments shall be approved only if the responsible City and State agencies ding a river dam up stream that restricts water flow, simply denies the public living down stream access to water usage. The same metaphor can be applied to the Ho'opili construction projects that have been proposed mauka or north of the Fort Weaver Road (FWR) corridor. Community leaders now believe that approving Schuler's development mauka of the 'Ewa Beach community will restrict the free flow access to H-1 to drivers and commuters is considered counter-productive and irresponsible.

The last resolution adopted by the 'Ewa Beach community relevant to the 'Ewa region was: support the insertion of wording into the EDP that will: a) Require the City and County of Honolulu to be in compliance with the federal rules and

regulations and specifications for sewage that are set by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and; b) Require that all planned development projects within the area that is covered by the 'Ewa Development Plan (EDP) and which will be users of the sewage line grid pay a "user fee" for sewage processed in 'Ewa. Unfortunately, these resolution went no where, both local councilman and the mayor were emotionally unmoved and remained adamant that proposed rail transit project was his top priority as the only solution to 'Ewa's problems.

As anyone can see, this Hannemann administration has constantly and consistently turned a deaf ear to any suggestion or recommendation. Despite all the push-backs, we still continue to plan, in search for solutions to all the on-going problems. Maybe, as midterm elections draws nearer, for all we know, a newly elected regime will see things differently; but for the present time, the public keeps plugging along hoping for the better.

**XI. HANNEMANN ADMINISTRATION PUSHES HARDER TO SELL RAIL PROPOSAL**

Mr. Matley, if you can for a second follow my trend of thought: If the Hawai'i state government designated the 'Ewa region as the second city, why would the city government transport people via a massive heavy-elevated-rail transit, a 6 billion dollar system, back and forth daily into an already overly crowded Honolulu district? Is this isn't a rational argument for a need to have rail? Even the city's own Traffic Alternative Analysis data makes no strong convincing argument justifying the real need for a pricy rail system. It makes no sense to me, does it to you? This is almost a complete reversal of smart, sensible and logical comprehensive planning. With the EDP already in place as the main workable planning tool, why in heaven's name hasn't it been implemented? Why hasn't the city and county of Honolulu caught on to the idea that the 'Ewa region needs more planning? I can only surmise that this elected mayor is working off his own political agenda. I reiterate again, as the mayor aggressively pushed his massive-heavy-elevated rail project, I personally feel less and less optimistic that rail is the answer, and it will work. This rail project is clearly a unilateral, a one-sided approach, based entirely on assumptions, inferences and suppositions with no hard facts.

Mind you, for the last two and a half years, I've attended nearly fifteen (15) city and county of Honolulu sponsored public so-called '*up-dates*', not to be confused with '*public hearings*', in which questions from the audience were written on pieces of paper and directed at Parsons/Brinkerhoff, the city's lead contracted planners. In all, there were nothing compelling or convincing enough to sway me to think that this proposed rail project would benefit the 'Ewa communities and satisfy the



taxpayers as well.

We sometimes, on an occasion or two, like to use jargons, descriptive languages, like "a dog and pony road show," or "a country revival meeting." Honestly, all those meeting I attended were exactly that. They were all just totally controlled exercises - no input on universal alternative available technologies, i.e., meg lev, rubber-on-concrete, toll-ways, etc.; no opportunity to openly discuss the up-front estimated 6-billion-dollar price tag, and the after perpetual maintenance cost; and no consideration on the different rail transit modes - elevated or surface, and mention of any available local existing infrastructure(s) along the twenty-two-mile route.

The mayor cites from its own Traffic Alternative Analysis study that by the year 2030 build out (from start to finish), the public will see an eleven percent (11%) to about twenty-three (23%) reduction in traffic. In my opinion, these are sorry and somewhat depressingly dismal numbers, and not totally convinced that public dollars will be wisely spent. All the data contained in the study are not backed up with real facts but rather put together by city engineers and rail experts just as a counter to rail opponents, not a clear-cut justifiable argument for pushing rail.

## XII. EDP VS. HEAVY RAIL: MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICES

In my opinion, enforcing provisions of the 'Ewa Development Plan, will drastically lessen the \$6 billion dollars estimated projected cost for the rail, by: 1) consider using the old OR&L existing sugar cane street-level train tracks. The route is being used today as a tour attraction goes westward from 'Ewa's Varona Village station to the Ko'olina Resort, soon to be home for the new Disneyland attractions. The old train tracks runs parallel in the same direction as the city's proposed rail Alignment, going in an eastward direction through 'Ewa and meanders along the West Loch shoreline into Waipahu; and, 2) create progressive financial strategies, i.e., tax incentives, tax credits as inducements to business employers to relocate to 'Ewa, and by promoting or persuading to bring with them workers back to the area, greatly reducing traffic congestion and the amount of car from 'Ewa going to and from town every morning and every evening.

The ballot referendum approved by O'ahu voters only reaffirmed the dire need for another mode of transportation. There are many, many more questions that have not been answered: With the hefty price tag, will this heavy, massive rail system be the primary or an alternate form of transportation? I raise this question because the government tried pilot projects in the past to supplement the automobile, they never worked out. My sense is that the city is selling heavy rail as the primary mode to replace the automobile, it will never happen. Let's consider

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that a light rail, street-level system will be at least half costly to the taxpayers, flexible enough to be built anywhere, and still compliment the automobile. Furthermore, the elevated rail will be cement columns and piers rising like towers in the sky, permanently built and structures to support concrete platform bays. There will be nineteen (19) of them each with a maximum heights of eighty (80) feet (comparable to a six or seven story building), and a minimum of thirty (30) feet (similar to a two story building), running twenty-three miles, starting at the eastern end of the 'Ewa plains and terminating at the University of Hawai'i in east Honolulu.

Building there permanent elevated concrete structures will destroy the natural scenic view and pristine beauty of the 'Ewa plains; there will be sizable lost of prime agricultural lands; private property will condemned; older people, businesses and communities will be displaced; ancient Hawaiian burial sites and archeological features will be destroyed, and not to mention other environmental, psychological and economic risks that will occur if this heavy rail is built.

Mr. Matley, as I indicated earlier, O'ahu homeowners were strapped with a huge 4 billion dollar sewer bill because the city did not comply with the federal EPA; and now, this 6 billion dollar rail bill! Gee wheez, we'll be paying off these two bill until the cows come home! Furthermore, in this terrible economic recession when state and federal revenue projections are at their lowest, it is grossly irresponsible and completely heartless for the Hannemann administration to ask the O'ahu taxpayers to fund this project. I believe the taxpayers in Hawai'i cannot afford this heavy, massive and costly rail system; its an ill-conceived proposal to just throw hard earned tax dollars at a bad project, with hopes of getting the greatest bang for the buck.

Lastly, a resident living on the 'Ewa plains, I cannot for a second sacrifice smart comprehensive planning for a costly, elevated rail that may or may not work. Either we plan for rail, or the second city, or both at once. I'm inclined to do both simultaneously, providing process is an open and a transparent one.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to present my views and opinions on this very important matter to us in Hawai'i, on the island of O'ahu. Mahalo, 'io 'oe.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Glenn O'Connell", with a long, sweeping flourish extending from the end of the name.